



120 State Street, Montpelier VT 05620-2501  
(p) 802-828-2445 | (f) 802-828-5107

## MEMORANDUM

TO: **Superintendents**  
FROM: **Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators**  
SUBJECT: **Introduction to the Online Teaching Specialist Endorsement**  
DATE: **8/21/13**

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The Vermont Standards for Professional Educators (VSBPE) is pleased to announce its adoption of the Online Teaching Specialist (OTS) endorsement for educators already possessing a teaching endorsement. The licensing of online teaching specialists supports our technological goals in schools and will ensure high-quality online instruction for our students. Over the past several months, the VSBPE has received feedback from the field indicating both strong support for the endorsement and some confusion about its practicalities. To support the implementation of the endorsement, we are providing answers to some specific questions we have received here.

### **What is the Online Teaching Specialist (OTS) endorsement?**

The intent of this endorsement is to promote and support quality online instruction from a distance. According to the authorizing statement, educators possessing this endorsement are *“authorized to teach students from a distance who are enrolled in online coursework. This endorsement is an add-on endorsement only and is limited to holders of pK-12 teaching endorsements. The holder’s area of online instruction and instructional level shall be indicated on the endorsement.”* For example, a Vermont social studies teacher who teaches an online US Government course via the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC) would need to add the OTS endorsement.

### **What do you mean by “online”?**

Agency staff created, and the VSBPE has adopted, a definition for “online learning” after consulting with experts in the field.

Online learning consists of student-teacher interaction which is conducted over the Internet and through the use of technology to support student learning from a distance with some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace.

Supervisory unions and districts can use this definition to help them determine whether or not an educator is acting as an online teaching specialist in his or her capacity and would need to hold the endorsement.

### **Don’t all VT educators have to incorporate technology into their teaching?**

Yes! As a matter of fact, the newly adopted Core Teaching Standards require **all Vermont educators** to infuse technology in their instruction. Educators must make content knowledge accessible to learners by using multiple means of communication, including digital media and information technology. The standards promote the idea that learners, with the support of their teachers, can use technology to take an active role in determining what they learn and how.

Teachers are also encouraged through these standards to adopt blended learning environments, “flipped classrooms,” and additional means of connecting students with global resources.

The VSBPE values teachers who infuse technology in their classes. This includes: the social studies teacher who uses iPads in his room to make learners more independent and collaborative during a unit on the Industrial Revolution, the math teacher who finds a way to use technology to scaffold his algebra lesson and further his students’ skill development, the foreign language teacher who creates a hybrid course by posting videos online so his students can continue to learn material at home, and the music teacher who asks her students to digitally record their own compositions to share with the world. **Such innovative educators would not be required to hold the OTS endorsement.** The VSBPE looks forward to the continued evolution of all educators across the state who are adopting rigorous instruction that uses technology and experimenting with online learning environments

#### **What is the scope of the new OTS endorsement?**

The OTS endorsement builds on the Core Teaching standards by describing the unique knowledge and skills necessary for *online instruction from a distance*. The endorsement standards focus on the facilitation and general online pedagogy necessary to conduct high-quality online course work with students from a distance. The endorsement does not currently address the instructional design, or more technical aspects, of online coursework

#### **Won’t this endorsement quickly become “dated”?**

Endorsement committee members carefully drafted standards with the goal of not singling out any particular technology. Instead, the endorsement standards emphasize familiarity with “existing and emerging” technologies along with strong online pedagogical knowledge. Moving forward, the VSBPE will monitor the relevance of this endorsement and its requirements, just as it does every endorsement area, as the needs of schools continue to evolve.

#### **What about virtual educators who do not reside in Vermont?**

Virtual educators who do not reside in Vermont are not required to obtain a Vermont license, including the OTS endorsement.

#### **What about educators who are providing online professional development?**

The AOE does not license professional development providers or educators offering virtual coursework to other educators. Licensure instead applies to educators when they are serving pK-12 students.

#### **What about educators who have already been acting as online teaching specialists?**

The VSBPE has created a “grandfather” plan to support such educators in obtaining the new license that recognizes their expertise. Please contact the Licensing Office at [AOE.LicensingInfo@state.vt.us](mailto:AOE.LicensingInfo@state.vt.us) or (802) 828-2445 for more information on how to add the OTS endorsement.



## Online Teaching Specialists (OTS) Implementation plan

Goal: To implement new standards while recognizing the qualifications of current Online Teaching Specialists

Timeline: All educators practicing as Online Teaching Specialists will need to obtain their license by the September 1, 2015.

Status	Requirements
New to OTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 18 total credits aligned with endorsement (9 may be counted from the content area of instruction)</li><li>• 9 credits <i>in online instruction</i></li></ul>
OTS who have taught one course or for one year online*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 15 total credits (6 may be counted from the content area for instruction)</li><li>• 9 credits or documentation of 135 hours of professional development <i>in online instruction</i></li><li>• Or modified Peer Review with: Abbreviated portfolio Reduced fee</li></ul>
OTS who have taught two courses or for two years online*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9 total credits (3 may be counted from the content area for instruction)</li><li>• 6 credits or documentation of 90 hours of professional development <i>in online instruction</i></li><li>• Or modified Peer Review with: Abbreviated portfolio Reduced fee</li></ul>
OTS who have taught three or more courses or for three or more years online*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 total credits (3 may be counted from the content area for instruction)</li><li>• 3 credits or documentation of 45 hours of professional development <i>in online instruction</i></li><li>• Or modified Peer Review with: Abbreviated portfolio Reduced fee</li></ul>

\*within last 5 years

